MEREDITH FINCH • IG GUARA

ROSE™

image

#10

The Story So Far...

In the land of Ttereve, magical ability is a death sentence.

Bjarke forces Will to confront his responsibility for the people of Millhaven, and news arrives that gives new hope to the future of the resistance.

Meanwhile, in the temple of Tera, Rose begins a series of tests that she hopes will show her the true source of her power, and a means to remove Thorne's collar. But Thorne's separation from Rose exposes him to the full might of the collar, with deadly consequences.

Ila and Felix contrive to escape with help from an unexpected source.

The adventure continues in this next exciting chapter of ROSE.

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WHUD
SNNNRRRWWL
I'VE DONE IT! I'VE FINALLY DONE IT!
THE LAST OF THE KHATZ! THORNE IS MINE!

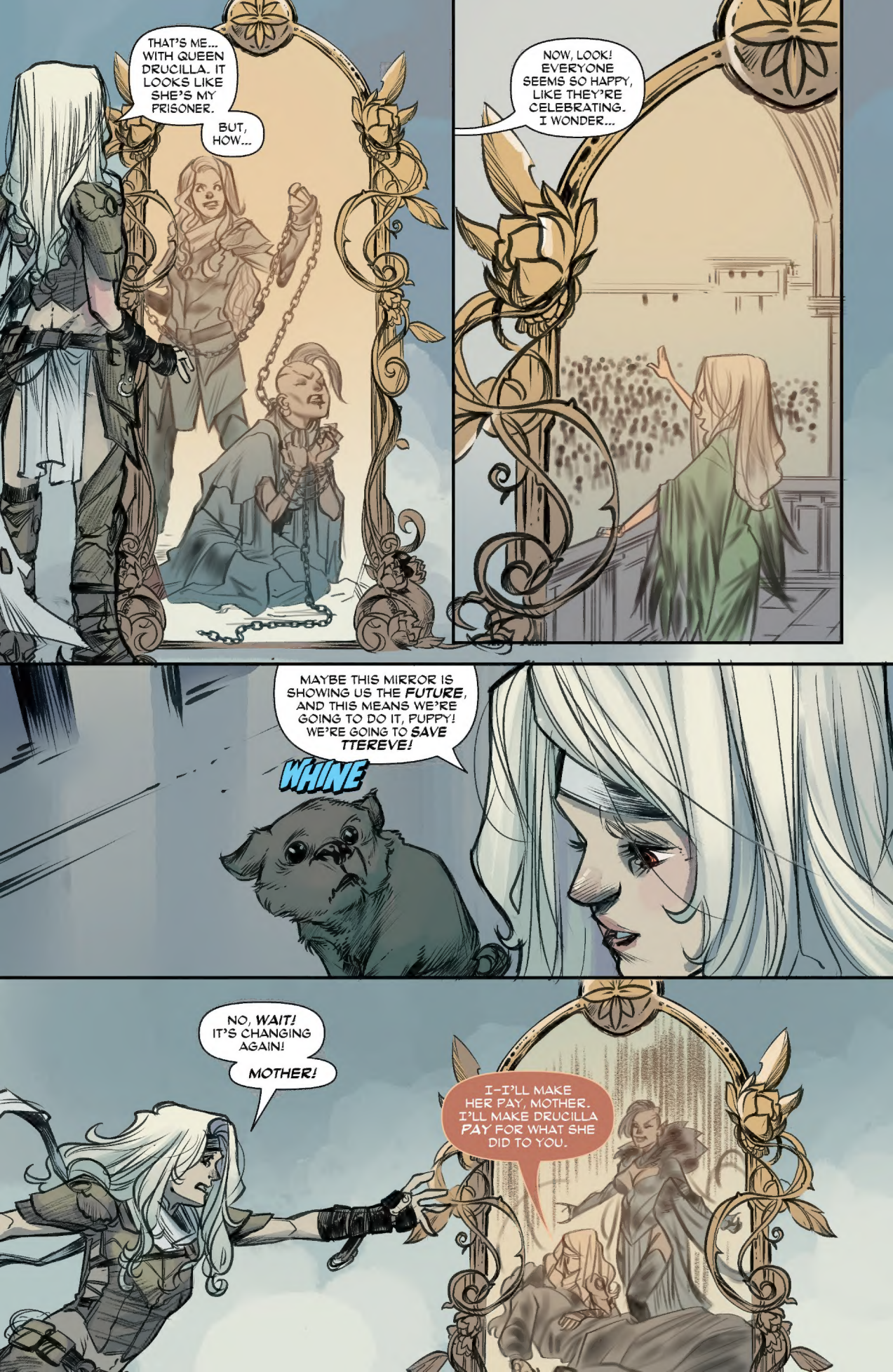
AHHH! THE POWER... HE'S EVEN STRONGER THAN I COULD HAVE IMAGINED!
EVERYONE ASSUMED THAT THE KHATZ COULD ONLY BE BONDED WITH A GUARDIAN, DOLORA. BUT I'VE PROVEN THEM ALL WRONG.
I NEVER DOUBTED YOU, POPPET. YOU'VE NEVER FAILED WHEN YOU SET YOUR MIND TO SOMETHING.
BUT, CONTROLLING THE KHAT IS ONLY THE FIRST STEP TO GLORY.
DO YOU HEAR, FATHER? I'M GOING TO HAVE THE ONE THING YOU WOULD NEVER GIVE ME.
I'LL BE A QUEEN. NOT JUST OF TTEREVE, BUT OF THE ENTIRE WORLD.

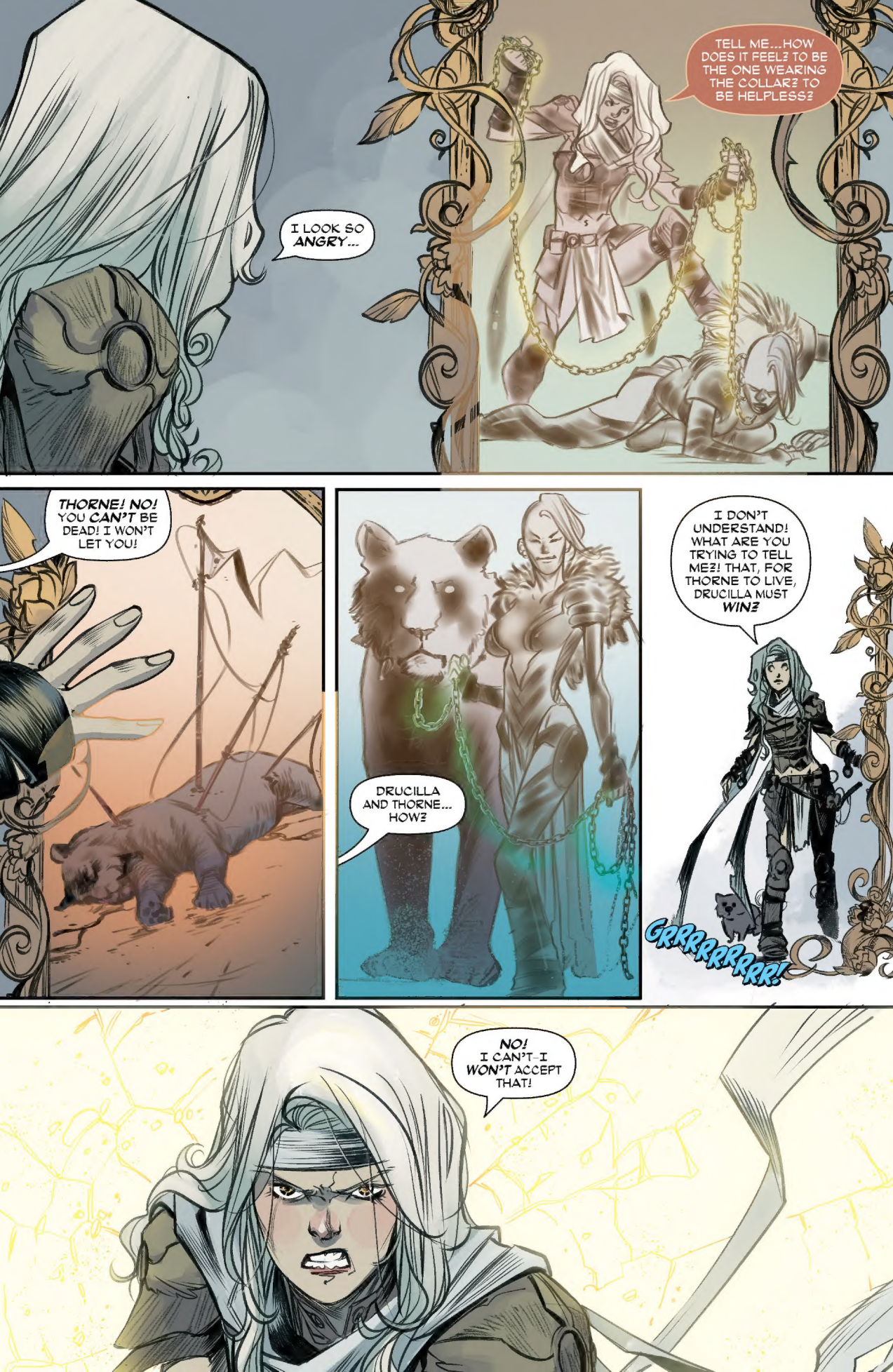
THERE IS STILL THE GUARDIAN TO BE DEALT WITH, AND SOMETHING HAS CHANGED. I CAN FEEL IT.
HER POWER HAS GROWN STRONGER, MORE FOCUSED.
YOU'VE BEEN WITH ME SINCE I WAS A BABE, DOLORA. DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT I WILL ALLOW EVERYTHING I HAVE DONE--EVERYTHING I HAVE SACRIFICED--TO BE UNDONE BY A CHILD?
WHAT CHANCE CAN ONE GRUBBY LITTLE GIRL POSSIBLY HAVE AGAINST BALOR'S CHOSEN BRIDE?

I PROMISED... ⊰PANT⊱ I WOULD GET YOU SOMETHING ⊰HUFF⊱ TO EAT. AND I NEVER BREAK A PROMISE. BUT...I GOTTA ADMIT...THINGS AREN'T LOOKING SO GOOD.
WHAT IS IT, LITTLE GUY? DO YOU SEE SOMETHING...
RRRUFF
...PLEASE, PLEASE LET IT BE SOMETHING WE CAN EAT.
WE MADE IT!
ARF ARF ARF

OHHH. MY BACK. WE'RE LUCKY ALL THE MOTHERS WERE HERE. I DON'T KNOW HOW I WAS GOING TO FEED EVERYONE AT THE SAME TIME.
WHINE
POOR BABY. YOUR MAMA'S NOT HERE?
DON'T WORRY I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU.
HERE. I'VE BEEN SAVING THIS.
THERE WASN'T ENOUGH TO SHARE, AND IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN RIGHT TO EAT WHEN ALL THOSE LITTLE BABIES WERE SO HUNGRY.
BOOONNNGG
GASP
A GUARDIAN MUST BE WILLING TO PUT THE WELL-BEING OF THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE ABOVE ALL ELSE.

WELL, I GUESS THIS MEANS WE PASSED THE SECOND TEST. ALTHOUGH THE GONG WAS A BIT MUCH.
BUT, NOW, WHERE ARE WE?
HMMMM. I WONDER...WHAT IS THIS SUPPOSED TO DO?


THAT'S ME... WITH QUEEN DRUCILLA. IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S MY PRISONER.
BUT, HOW...
NOW, LOOK! EVERYONE SEEMS SO HAPPY, LIKE THEY'RE CELEBRATING. I WONDER...
MAYBE THIS MIRROR IS SHOWING US THE *FUTURE*, AND THIS MEANS WE'RE GOING TO DO IT, PUPPY! WE'RE GOING TO *SAVE TTEREVE!*
WHINE
NO, *WAIT!* IT'S CHANGING AGAIN!
MOTHER!
I-I'LL MAKE HER PAY, MOTHER. I'LL MAKE DRUCILLA *PAY* FOR WHAT SHE DID TO YOU.


I LOOK SO ANGRY...
TELL ME...HOW DOES IT FEEL? TO BE THE ONE WEARING THE COLLAR? TO BE HELPLESS?
THORNE! NO! YOU CAN'T BE DEAD! I WON'T LET YOU!
DRUCILLA AND THORNE... HOW?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME?! THAT, FOR THORNE TO LIVE, DRUCILLA MUST WIN?
GRRRRRRRRRR!
NO! I CAN'T–I WON'T ACCEPT THAT!

THE MIRROR PRESENTS YOU ONLY WITH POSSIBILITIES. THE FUTURE DEPENDS UPON YOUR CHOICE, GUARDIAN. YOUR FINAL TEST.
WILL YOU FIND GLORY AS YOU CONTINUE IN YOUR SEARCH FOR YOUR TRUTH, LEARN TO HARNESS YOUR POWER AND SAVE THE LAND OF TTEREVE OR WILL YOU SEEK TO SAVE YOUR COMPANION?
THE FUTURE OF TTEREVE IS IN YOUR HANDS.
YOU AREN'T OFFERING ME GLORY. YOU ARE ASKING ME TO CHOOSE BETWEEN VENGEANCE AND FRIENDSHIP.
I PROMISED MY MOTHER I WOULD MAKE DRUCILLA PAY FOR WHAT SHE DID.
BUT I WON'T SACRIFICE THORNE TO DO IT. AND SHE WOULDN'T WANT ME TO.
YOU WOULD PUT THE LIFE OF A BEAST ABOVE YOUR DUTY TO YOUR MOTHER? ABOVE THE GLORY YOU WOULD RECEIVE FOR FREEING THE CITIZENS OF TTEREVE?!
I'M NO BETTER THAN DRUCILLA IF I SEEK REVENGE OVER LOVE. THAT'S NOT SAVING THE PEOPLE OF TTEREVE, IT'S REPLACING ONE TYRANT WITH ANOTHER.
THAT PERSON IN THAT MIRROR... STANDING OVER DRUCILLA...THAT ISN'T ME...IT ISN'T WHO I WANT TO BE.

MAYBE I'LL END UP A PRISONER, BUT THORNE WILL BE ALIVE, AND WHERE THERE IS LIFE, THERE IS HOPE.
A DAY WILL COME IN THE BATTLE AHEAD WHERE YOU MAY HAVE CAUSE TO LOSE HOPE, TO LOSE FAITH IN WHO AND WHAT YOU ARE.
ACCEPT THIS HEART STONE AS A GIFT FROM US TO WARD AGAINST THE COMING DARKNESS.
LIKE YOU, ITS TRUE POWER COMES FROM WITHIN.
GOOD OR BAD, IT WILL REFLECT BACK THE ESSENCE OF THE POWER THAT LIES WITHIN THE WEARER.
NOW. LET US SEE IF WE CAN FREE YOUR KHAT FROM HIS CHAINS AND MAKE YOU A PROPER GUARDIAN.

"I JUST HAVE A FEELING..."
PLEDGED MYSELF TO PROTECT HER AND THE LITTLE BRAT GOES AND THROWS HERSELF DOWN THE FIRST RABBIT HOLE SHE FINDS.
I SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO LISTEN TO BLOODY GIRLS AND THEIR BLOODY FEELINGS.
SIMON! SIMON, I'VE DONE IT! I'M GOING TO BE A GUARDIAN.
I SURE AS HELL HOPE SO, OTHERWISE I WASTED AN ENTIRE DAY SITTING HERE FOR NOTHING.
COME ON, SIMON. I NEEDED TO BE TESTED TO UNDERSTAND THE SOURCE OF MY POWER AND WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO BE A GUARDIAN.
NOW, THEY ARE GOING TO TAKE THAT HORRIBLE COLLAR OFF THORNE. AND THEN WE CAN FINALLY BE TOGETHER LIKE WE WERE MEANT TO BE.

WHAT IS IT?
SOMETHING'S WRONG. IT'S FORBIDDEN TO SHED BLOOD ON HOLY GROUND.
IT'S FRESH...
THORNE.
THORNE! I'M COMING!
ROSE! ROSE, WAIT!

NO...
HE WOULDN'T... HE COULDN'T...
ROSE! YOU'VE GOT TO STOP RUNNING OFF LIKE THA--
SHE IGNORED US FOR SO LONG, WE BELIEVED THE POWER OF TERA KEPT US SAFE... BEYOND HER REACH.
WE WERE WRONG.
FORGIVE US, ROSE. WE ERRED IN SEPARATING YOU AND THORNE.
WITHOUT YOUR CONNECTION TO PROTECT HIM, DRUCILLA WAS ABLE TO USE THE POWER OF THE COLLAR ON THORNE.

THORNE KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG, AND I DIDN'T LISTEN.
I LET MY NEED TO BE A GUARDIAN BLIND ME TO THE NEEDS OF MY FRIEND.
AND BECAUSE OF THAT...WE HAVE BOTH LOST SOMEONE WE LOVE.
I'LL SHOW HER WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE CONTROLLED.
REMEMBER THE MIRROR. YOU DID WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS NECESSARY TO ACCESS YOUR POWER AND HELP THORNE.
DO NOT LET DRUCILLA FILL YOU WITH ANGER AND DOUBT.
YOU ARE A TRUE GUARDIAN. IN YOUR HEART, IN YOUR CAPACITY TO LOVE IS WHERE YOUR POWER LIES. USE IT...TRUST IT AND IT WILL NEVER BETRAY YOU.

OH, SIMON! I PRETENDED I WAS LISTENING TO MY HEART... BUT, IF I HAD...IF I REALLY HAD, MAYBE THIS...THIS AWFULNESS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED.
AAAAHH!
ROSE, YOU HAVE TO KNOW, THIS WASN'T HIS FAULT. YOU DON'T KNOW HOW POWERFUL DRUCILLA IS...
...THE THINGS SHE CAN MAKE YOU DO.
SHE...SHE'S GOT HIM. SHE'S GOT THORNE!

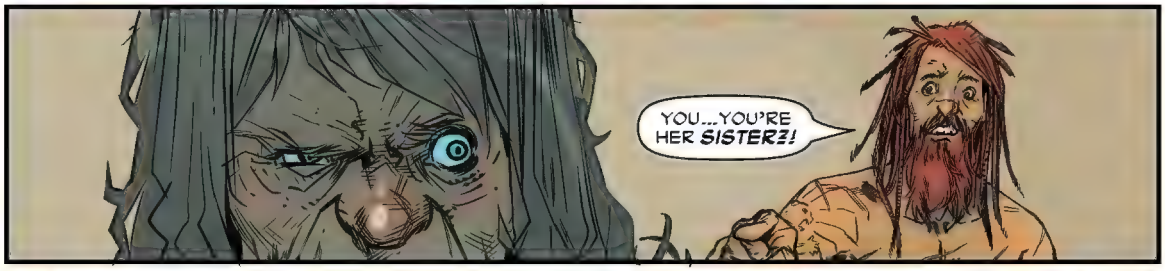
IF THE IDEA WAS TO ESCAPE THE CASTLE, SHOULDN'T WE BE GOING UP INSTEAD OF DOWN?
BY ALL MEANS, IF YOU WANT TO GET ROUNDED UP WITH THE REST OF THE PRISONERS...
YOU HAVE PLAYED YOUR PART WELL, ARTUS, AND FOR THAT I AM GRATEFUL. BUT, PRINCE FELIX GREW UP IN THIS CASTLE. WE MUST LET THOSE WHO ARE BEST SUITED PLAY THEIR PART, AS WELL.

YEARS AGO, WHEN THINGS STARTED TO GO BADLY, I TOOK SOME PRECAUTIONS. I GUESS, EVEN THEN, A PART OF ME WAS AFRAID OF WHAT MY SISTER WAS CAPABLE OF.
GET BACK! SOMEONE'S COMING.
OR SOME THING!
PLEASE... GIVE ME A REASON TO SLIT YOUR THROAT.

PRINCE FELIX. I HEARD THERE WAS SOME TROUBLE WITH RATS IN THE CASTLE.
BUT NOW THAT DRUCILLA HAS CONTROL OF A KHAT, THAT WON'T BE A PROBLEM FOR MUCH LONGER.
LIAR! YOU, TREACHEROUS, OLD SPIDER! YOU ARE GOING TO PAY...
LET ME HANDLE THIS, PRINCE FELIX.
ILA!
AFTER ALL, NO ONE HAS MORE RIGHT TO CALL DOLORA NAMES THAN THEN HER BIG SISTER.

SISTER?!
I HEARD YOU WERE IN THE DUNGEONS. I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THEY WEREN'T ENOUGH TO HOLD AN OLD WITCH LIKE YOU.
NO, BUT THEY ARE WELL SUITED TO HOLD MANIPULATIVE LIARS.
OH, IT'S TRUE ALRIGHT. I'M ON MY WAY TO OPEN THE BACK GATE FOR THE NEWEST RESIDENT OF THE PALACE.
NOW THAT DRUCILLA HAS THE LAST KHAT UNDER HER COMMAND, IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SHE HAS YOUR PRECIOUS GUARDIAN, TOO.
AND THEN, FINALLY, MAGIC, AND THE LAND THAT SPAWNED, IT WILL BE DESTROYED!
NOT IF I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT.

IS SHE...?
ASLEEP. FOR NOW.


YOU...YOU'RE HER *SISTER*?!

AND DRUCILLA IS *YOURS*. SO, PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER.
WE NEED TO CONFIRM WHAT DOLORA SAID IS TRUE, AND, IF IT IS, THEN WE HAVE A GUARDIAN TO FIND AND NOT A MOMENT TO WASTE.

RIGHT.

WHERE IS DOLORA? SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HERE TO WITNESS MY MOMENT OF TRIUMPH.
I'M SURE SHE'LL BE HERE SOON, YOUR MAJESTY. WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO GO AND FIND...?
HUSH! HE'S HERE!
WELCOME, THORNE...TO YOUR NEW HOME.

THIS IS BAD. THIS IS REALLY, REALLY BAD.
NEXT MONTH: HONOR.

NEXT MONTH

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SKYWARD

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SNEAK PREVIEW

MORNING, JOAN!
WILLA! CHECK THIS OUT.
I FOUND IT WHEN I WAS LEAVING WORK.
ISN'T IT HILARIOUS? I WONDER WHAT IT MEANS.
SO WEIRD.
CROSSING AHEAD

HI EDISON.
YOU'RE OLDER THAN ME, RIGHT?
NOT SUPER OLDER. YOU'RE NOT *OLD*, I MEAN. BUT YOU'RE OLD*ER* THAN ME.
RIGHT?
YEAH. WHY?

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT THE WORLD WAS LIKE WITH GRAVITY?
I DO.
HOW WAS IT? DID PEOPLE HATE NOT BEING ABLE TO FLY?
I THINK I WOULD HAVE GONE CRAZY. NOT BEING ABLE TO GO *UP*?
WHAT WAS WALKING LIKE?
I CAN'T ANSWER THAT ONE.
OH GOD. I'M SORRY. I FORGOT ABOUT YOUR LEGS--

CONTINUED IN SKYWARD #1, APRIL 2018

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"A light-hearted twist on mythical monsters that is rooted in relatable personal dramedy."
— AV Club
"In a year that often felt dark and dystopian, this delightful series from writer Grace Ellis (Lumberjanes), newcomer artist Shae Beagle, and editor Laurenn McCubbin was a wonderful escape."
— Entertainment Weekly
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